total amount of Rs. 786 crores would be provided to the mills enabling them to clear the payment of cane price dues to the sugarcane growers.

(ii) In order to boost export of sugar, Government has amended the Sugar Development Act, 1982 to enable it, *inter alia*, to utilize the Sugar Development Fund for defraying expenditure on internal transport charges & neutralization of ocean freight disadvantage to the sugar factories on export shipments of sugar.

Financial package for sugarcane farmers

†2614. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR:
SHRI DATTA MEGHE :

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have sanctioned Rs. 600 crores from the Sugar Development Fund for the four Sugarcane growing States, namely, Punjab, Haryana, U.P. and Uttaranchal;

(b) if so, whether this is done to assist the sugarcane farmers who were not paid as per the State Advisory Prices (SAP) especially in Maharashtra; and

(c) if so, Government's stand with regard to providing assistance from the said fund to Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Purchase and storage of wheat by FCI

2615. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of wheat purchased by Food Corporation of India and other State agencies during the period April to June, 2003, State-wise and agency-wise;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) the stock of wheat with the Food Corporation of India as on 30th June, 2003; and

(c) the steps being taken by Food Corporation of India to reduce its transit and storage losses which are quite high as compared to those of such agencies in developed countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA) : (a) A statement giving the required information is enclosed (*See* below).

(b) The stock position of wheat in Central Pool as on 30th June, 2003 is as under :

(Qty. in lakh tonnes)

FCI	State Agencies	Total
67.38	174.56	241.94

(c) The following important steps are being taken by the Food Corporation of India to reduce its transit and storage losses :—

(i) Adoption of 50 Kg. packing in a phased manner to avoid use of hooks during handling;

(ii) Tightening of security at depots, intensifying, surprise checks, regular stock verification;

(iii) Encouraging double line machine stitching of bags;

(iv) Inspection of depots and weighbridges;

(v) Undertaking pre-monsoon furmigation;

(vi) Periodical prophylactic and curative treatment of stocks as prescribed;

(vii) Speeding up of cases of writer off and fixation of responsibility after undertaking investigation and to recover the losses wherever called for after following the prescribed procedures as per Staff Regulations;

(viii) Three tier systems of audit *i.e.* Internal/Statutory and CAG;

(ix) Entrusting a Study on the control of transit losses to RITES to find ways and means to control losses in rail movement.

Statement

State wise Procurement of Wheat by FCI and State Agencies from April to June, 2003

(In '000 tonnes)

State/U.T.	FCI	State Agencies	Total
Bihar	Neg	1	1
Haryana	818	4304	5122
HP	1	-	1
MP	27	161	188
Punjab	2548	6390	8938
Rajasthan	137	122	259
Uttaranchal	5	62	67
UP	-	1213	1213
Delhi	12	-	12
TOTAL	3548	12253	15801

Hike in prices of essential commodities

2616. SHRI R.K. ANAND:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA :

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of hike in prices of essential commodities every year and the reasons advanced therefor, like, floods, monsoons and drought, these being natural events happening every year;

(b) whether Government feel its responsibility to overcome such problems beforehand and ensure that there are no price hikes because of these factors; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereto?